



Carrots

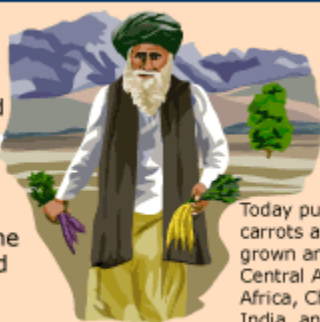
DID YOU KNOW?

The first carrots were not orange. In the 1500s, the Dutch bred purple carrots with yellow carrots to develop the first orange carrots.



ORIGINS

White carrots are native to Europe and red carrots are native to Asia. Yellow and purple carrots are native to the area now called Afghanistan.



Today purple carrots are still grown and eaten in Central Asia, North Africa, China, India, and the Middle East.

CLASSIFYING CARROTS

FAMILY

Aplacae (Umbelliferae)

There are about 3,000 species in this family.

carrot



celery



parsnip



poison hemlock



fennel



parsley



GENUS

Daucus

This is the Latin word for carrot.



SPECIES

carota

This comes from the Greek word *karotan*, meaning carrot.



Carrots come in all shapes, sizes, and colors.

THE CARROT PLANT

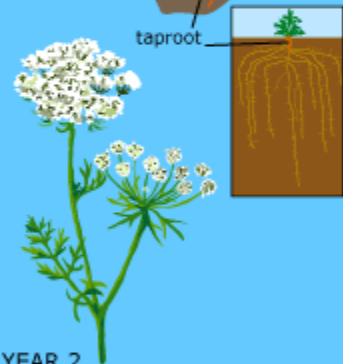
The carrot plant lives for two years.

YEAR 1

During the first year, the root grows. It is ready to harvest in 70-150 days, depending upon the variety.



taproot



YEAR 2

If not picked the first year, the root over winters. The next year, the carrot plant uses the stored food in the root to send up a flower stalk. Flowering wild carrot has small white roots and is common along roadsides in much of the U.S.

GROWING AND HARVESTING CARROTS

Plant carrots in spring in cooler climates and in fall in hotter climates. Prepare the soil well! Most varieties like deep, loose, well-drained soil. If planted in heavy soil, carrots may produce forked roots.

Sprinkle the seeds in rows spaced about 12 to 18 in. (30-46 cm) apart. After they come up, thin them to one inch (2.5 cm) apart. When the tops grow thicker, thin to about 2-3 in. (7-8 cm) apart.

To get nice carrots, I have to thin out the seedlings so they will have room to grow.

My carrots are all forked! I guess my soil is too heavy for this variety.

Harvest carrots when they are at least finger size. The smaller carrots are juicier and more tender.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE

Carrots have more beta-carotene, from which the body makes vitamin A, than any other vegetable. Plant breeders have developed carrot varieties that have about 75% more beta carotene than the carrot varieties that existed 25 years ago.



A person who does not have enough vitamin A cannot see well in the dark. If left untreated, the person may become blind. Each year an estimated 350,000 children, mostly living in developing countries, go blind because their bodies lack vitamin A.